

SNAPSHOT

OFFICE OF WORK & FAMILY LIFE

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE SERVICES 2ND QUARTER 2007

UTAH'S EARLY LEARNING GUIDELINES

Why do we care about early childhood education

Early childhood, which is the period in a child's life from birth to age five, is a critical time for children to develop the physical, emotional, social and cognitive skills they will need for the rest of their lives. It is also the time that young children prepare to enter school ready to learn.

The importance of this time in a child's life is underscored by an upsurge in brain research over the past ten years about a child's first five years of life. The research has documented the profound influence of early experiences upon children's cognitive development. An investigation of neurobiology, behavioral and social sciences concluded that what happens in the first five years of life absolutely matters. This period provides a foundation that will support a child all the way into adulthood. The course of a child's development can be altered through effective early childhood instruction.¹

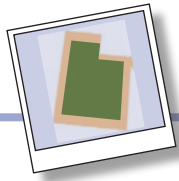
This quarter's Snapshot focuses on school-readiness for pre-kindergarten children. In accordance with requirements of the federal Child Care Development Fund block grant, the Utah State Office of Education (USOE), in conjunction with Utah Family Center and the Office of Child Care, has developed guidelines to help families, educators and communities make informed decisions about curricula for pre-K kids. The culmination of a three-year project of research, writing, and implementation, the guidelines are available in both English and Spanish.



"The intent of this project is to help children, whether they are cared for at home, in a child care facility, or elsewhere, to be ready to learn as they enter kindergarten."

Lynette Rasmussen, Director,
Office of Child Care

¹ Shonkoff, J.P., D.A. Phillips (Eds.), *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington, D.C. National Academy Press. National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 2000.



What are the Guidelines?

Parents and families have the primary role and responsibility for their child's learning in the early foundational years. Utah's Early Learning Guidelines serve as a valuable tool for learning at home and opening communication channels among preschool teachers, child care providers, and parents. The guidelines help establish meaningful partnerships that impact a child's academic success today and in the future.

The guidelines describe specific, research-based objectives for pre-kindergarten children in five basic content areas. The implementation of these guidelines in the home and in early childhood programs will improve kindergarten transition and reduce readiness and achievement gaps.

The five basic areas are:

- Self-Help Skills (such as eating independently, using the restroom independently, and cleaning up after self)
- Social/Emotional Skills (such as trying new things, taking turns, sharing, listening, and showing concern for others)
- Large/Small Motor Skills (such as hopping, jumping, running, throwing; holding writing instruments correctly and putting together puzzles)
- Math Skills (such as counting to ten and using comparative words)
- Language and Literacy (such as speaking in complete sentences, expressing feelings and ideas, and knowing poems and songs)

"It is anticipated as these guidelines are implemented into programs for young children that they will help improve children's readiness for school and the overall quality of preschool programs in the state."

Sharon Lay,
Utah State Office of Education

By using the guidelines, you can help children:

- Develop a positive learning attitude (curiosity, persistence)
- Develop social skills and ethical responsibility (respect, kindness, follow rules)
- Demonstrate responsible emotional behaviors (positive and appropriate self-expression)
- Develop physical skills and personal hygiene (health/fitness, proper eating, motor skills)
- Understand and use basic concepts and skills (vocabulary, reasoning, problem-solving)
- Develop communication skills (language, music/dance, art, math, listening)

An informal survey conducted by the Office of Work & Family Life indicates that more than three out of five child care providers are already using these guidelines in their programs. Of those, 94% agreed that the guidelines benefit children and help prepare them for kindergarten.

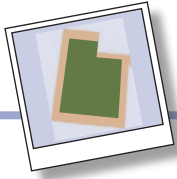
FUTURE SNAPSHOTS IN THIS SERIES

Utah's Early Learning Guidelines	(2nd Quarter 2007)
The Baby Steps Program	(3rd Quarter 2007)
2007 Office of Child Care Annual Report	(4th Quarter 2007)

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Candid Response



“Providers have benefited from the Early Learning Guidelines by having a better understanding of what children should be exposed to during the early years. It has helped them plan a better program and provide meaningful learning experiences for children. Our staff at CCR&R created the Alphabet Alley boxes for the Lending Library based on the Early Learning Guidelines. It has been very successful – the providers can’t get enough of them! Every time a provider comes to the Lending Library, they check them out. In less than a month, sixteen of these boxes are already out and in the hands of providers.”

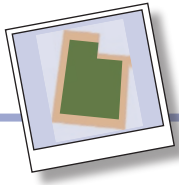
Child Care Resource and Referral

“My Name is Vanessa Abernethy. I have a three-year-old daughter, and she learned the alphabet when she was two and half years, but up until now I could not find an effective way to teach her how to recognize the letters of the alphabet. I found it extremely hard until Sarah Barker from the Lending Library at the CCR&R - Metro showed me a new project, ‘The Alphabet Alley.’ I thought: This might work! So, I brought it home to my daughter Alyssa and she loved it! She could not get enough of it, (I mean, the box has everything for the child to learn about each letter), and she was writing the letter “A”

within 2 days. The following week I checked out some other boxes with different letters, and by the end of 3 weeks she was writing her name. It was unbelievable! - Not only that but she started learning about the letter A last week at her preschool, and her teacher said that she is only one that dominates the alphabet in her class, and gives examples of other words that start with the same letter. They are very impressed with what she knows and I am so grateful to CCR&R for providing us with such a great resource for the providers and parents like myself to teach our little ones.”



A Portrait of a Great Outcome



Resources:

- ✓ For a copy of the Early Learning Guidelines, visit www.schools.utah.gov/curr/preschool-kindergarten/PDF/PreKindergartenGuidelinesFINALDRAFT.pdf
- ✓ For a pamphlet on school readiness, visit jobs.utah.gov/opencms/occ/occ2/learnmore/other/kindergarten.pdf
- ✓ For a great interactive website designed to help parents, educators and child care providers make full use of the Early Learning Guidelines, visit www.readyschool.org
- ✓ For a worthwhile video about early childhood development, search the web for the DVD, *Ten Things Every Child Needs* available in many places DVDs are sold.



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